

Criminological Aspects of Hate Crime

Abstract

Hate crime refers to a set of crimes committed for a prejudicial motive against a group of people for their essential personality characteristics such as nationality, religion, or sexual orientation. Topicality of the issue stems from the fact that related social phenomena such as racism, xenophobia, radicalisation, or discrimination of minorities are far from being satisfactorily dealt with even in Western society. The fundamental goal of this thesis is to provide the reader with a comprehensive criminological view of hate crimes in the territory of the Czech Republic.

Main findings include the following: the concept of hate crime is not unified in theory nor legislation in terms of protected characteristics, which negatively translates into research and policy of hate crime. The quantity of registered crime is in the order of less than 200 crimes per year, its trend is downward, and its structure is predominantly non-violent; unfortunately, it is also accompanied by high latency. The Czech perpetrator is usually male and a repeat offender, in early adulthood, with a basic education and without a factual relationship to extremist groups. Victims of violent forms of hate crime are, in principle, suffering more intense harm (especially psychological) than victims of comparable "common" criminality.

Within criminal aetiology, factors including socio-economic deficiencies of perpetrators, changes in values of society, social learning of prejudices, tendency to idealise one's own social group and to stereotype other groups and the dissocial personality of the perpetrator, have been identified. Repressive form of policy is greatly limited by the high latency of crime and a high reduction in prosecution; a special training of law enforcement personnel attempts to solve this issue. Preventive form of policy should emphasise education of the youth, public cooperation with security forces, building victims' confidence towards the relevant state authorities and monitoring activities of extremist groups.

One of the richest sources of hate speech in cyberspace are social networks, whose criminogenic factors have been demonstrated with phenomena such as incentive to share content, personalisation of content, social bubbles, and confirmation bias. Following the findings of empirical studies, the hypothesis that online hate speech causally affects the frequency of offline hate crimes has been supported.

These and other findings provide an elementary foundation for a holistic understanding of hate crime and its further research.

Keywords: hate crime, extremism, criminology